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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002128

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: NEXT STEPS ON IRAQ

REF: A. ANKARA 2077

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 2683

Classified By: CDA Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The GOT is looking at ways to increase engagement with PM Maliki and the GOI. It is already committed to hosting the next Expanded Neighbors group ministerial in Istanbul, and hopes to focus the GOI, USG, and others on committing to specific dates for the meeting. The Turks also want to continue their participation in the Neighbors process working groups. They are pleased the August 8-9 security working group meeting in Damascus agreed to a follow-on technical experts meeting. The GOT understands the political difficulties now facing PM Maliki and is patiently awaiting word on when GOI Interior Minister Bulani and NSA Rubaie will travel to Ankara for talks on bilateral security and counter-terrorism agreements. Turkish officials are also closely following the debate in Washington regarding USG policy on Iraq. END SUMMARY

NEIGHBORS SECURITY WORKING GROUP

[1](#)2. (C) GOT Coordinator for Iraq Oguz Celikkol provided Charge with a read-out of his trip to Damascus for the August 8-9 meeting of the Iraq Neighbors security working group. Celikkol said the meeting itself held no surprises for the GOT, but the fact that it happened was positive for continued engagement between Iraq and its neighbors. Since neither the Iranians nor the Syrians were particularly enthusiastic about creating smaller side- or sub-groups, Celikkol was pleased the attendees at least agreed to hold a follow-on technical experts meeting within a month.

[1](#)3. (C) The bilateral side meetings proved more useful than the plenary session, Celikkol said, particularly his meeting with Syria's Intelligence Chief. The SARG official (who also serves as chair of the Turkey-Syria Joint Security Commission) claimed that Syria is doing everything it can to stem the flow of foreign fighters entering Iraq through its territory, and complained that Iraqi officials were falsely blaming Syria for a number of foreign terrorists having crossed into Iraq. He said the SARG had evidence to refute Iraq's charges and claimed Syrian border officials are

stopping at least 500 individuals per month. Charge countered that foreign fighters continue to cross from Syria into Iraq every day and the SARG can do more to stem the flow. Despite SARG sensitivities to GOI charges, Celikkol said the Syrians would host PM Maliki for an August 20 visit to Damascus.

EXPANDED NEIGHBORS MINISTERIAL

¶4. (C) The GOT wants to maintain momentum in the Expanded Neighbors process by pressing the GOI and others to fix dates for the ministerial this Fall in Istanbul. Charge referenced remarks by PM Maliki and others on organizing a senior officials meeting on the margins of UNGA, to be followed by the ministerial in Turkey after Ramadan ends in October. Celikkol agreed the approach seemed logical, but reiterated Turkey is ready to host the meeting at any time, regardless of Ramadan.

FURTHER GOT-GOI ENGAGEMENT

¶5. (C) The GOT is also actively reaching out to convince Iraqi Sunni groups to stay engaged in Iraq's political process and to push for Sunni-Shia rapprochement, Celikkol said. Maliki was grateful for PM Erdogan's briefing on Turkish efforts and continued Turkish support. Turkish officials are keeping Maliki's office informed of their contacts. The GOT is waiting to hear when GOI Interior Minister Bulani and NSA Rubaie can travel to Ankara for negotiations on bilateral security and counter-terrorism

ANKARA 00002128 002 OF 002

agreements. Although the August 7 MOU provides for talks within two weeks, Turkey recognizes the difficulties facing Maliki's administration and is willing to be patient, provided Iraq intends to follow through in the near future. The GOT has also invited an Iraqi delegation to Ankara for meetings to discuss finalizing an agreement on bilateral economic cooperation.

FUTURE USG ROLE IN IRAQ

¶6. (C) Celikkol said the GOT is closely following debates in Washington over U.S. troop levels in Iraq and plans for continued USG engagement. Noting press coverage of the new Joint Campaign Plan for Iraq, Celikkol said it appeared to be a positive, sound base for pursuing sustainable security and advancing political reconciliation in Iraq. He added that the GOT understands USG concerns about a cross-border operation against the PKK, and suggested that any reference to this issue also include language encouraging Iraq to eliminate the PKK presence. Celikkol also stressed the importance of Iraqi natural gas exports to Turkey, as well as to Kuwait. Given continued close trilateral engagement on energy issues, and specifically gas exports to Turkey, adding such a clause seemed warranted. Finally, Celikkol noted that a reference in the plan to UNSCR 1770 would be useful and perceived favorably by the international community.

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